



**Office of the Attorney General
Paul G. Summers**

NEWS RELEASE

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**TENNESSEE ATTORNEY GENERAL SUGGESTS CAUTION WHEN USING, BUYING
GIFT CARDS DURING HOLIDAYS**

While a gift certificate or a gift card may seem to be the perfect solution to holiday shopping, Tennessee Attorney General Paul G. Summers urges Tennesseans to pay close attention to the fine print when buying or using gift cards and certificates.

Gift cards and certificates may expire or decrease in value if not used right away.

“Gift cards to restaurants and various stores are becoming more popular as consumers search for suitable gifts during the holiday season” said Attorney General Summers. “But, it pays to know in advance what conditions may apply to your gift certificate to make sure you get the full benefits, and do not wind up with a worthless piece of plastic.”

There are a number of potential problems holiday shoppers might incur with gift cards and certificates. Some issuers, for example, deduct a monthly fee from the gift card or apply inactivity fees if the card has not been used for some period of time, thus reducing their value. Some cards expire and are worthless at the end of a certain period of time.

“The recipients may not realize there is a time limit or deduction in the value until it is too late,” Attorney General Summers said. “In the end, you may find the card is worth very little or nothing if you don't pay attention to the details.”

Attorney General Summers offers the following tips to ensure Tennesseans do not lose the value of their gift certificates:

- *Ask before you buy if there are time restrictions on the use of the card.
- *Determine if there are any fees that apply to the gift card, including those that apply after the sale and reduce the value of the card.
- *Know ahead of time what to do in the event a card is lost or stolen.
- *Find out which locations will accept the gift card.
- *Determine where to report any problems with the gift certificate.
- *Ask if there is a toll-free number or web site that will provide this information.

*If you purchase a gift card as a gift, pass this information on to the recipient to make sure that they benefit from the full value of your gift.

If the terms of the gift card are not clearly stated on the card itself, or its packaging, or if you have a problem with a gift card or the companies that sell them, you may report complaints to the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs by calling (615) 741-4737 or toll-free within Tennessee at 1-800-342- 8385. If the card is issued by a bank, you may report problems to the Tennessee Department of Financial Institutions (615) 741-5603 or the Comptroller of the Currency at 800-613-6743.